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DRL FOR JONATHAN BEMIS

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SUBJECT: SLOVENIA: MFA PRAISE, CONCERNS ABOUT HRR 2008

MFA Praise for 2008 HRR  
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¶1. (SBU) Andrej Benedejcic, acting director of the MFA's policy planning and multilateral affairs division, expressed appreciation to CDA on February 27 for Post's "big investment" in producing the Human Rights Report and for Post's engagement with various ministries on human rights issues. He noted that Slovenia would use the report in preparing for its Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council. Benedejcic mentioned that the MFA had shared the report with other interested ministries, and was awaiting their feedback. The MFA posted its initial reaction to the report in a February 26 press release on its website.

Concerns about Equating "Erased" with "Stateless" Persons  
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¶2. (SBU) Benedejcic expressed concern about the shift of the "Erased" issue to the section on Stateless Persons. He commented that the previous placement of the issue in the "National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities" section was more appropriate since the "Erased" should not be considered stateless; he noted that they have citizenship in other countries but their legal status in Slovenia is in question. Benedejcic also highlighted the recent steps the Ministry of Interior had taken to resolve the issue, and said he would get Interior's input on the report.

Human Rights Outlook for 2009  
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¶3. (SBU) Comment: Interior Minister Katerina Kresal has begun the process of correcting the status of the Erased, and consequently is under fire from opposition parties in parliament. Kresal's efforts could go a long way toward resolving the longest-running human rights issue in Slovenia, but it will be a political, not just administrative, battle to make progress. On the Roma question, another issue highlighted in the 2008 HRR, the MFA has told us they hope to use Slovenia's presidency of the Council of Europe from May to November 2009 as a springboard to greater integration and development of Slovenia's two main Roma communities.  
FREDEN